

Duxbury hero wins award

National honor for man who died in Cape rescue

By Dennis Tatz
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A 56-year-old Duxbury man who died trying to save a friend from drowning last year is among the 19 people being cited today for heroism by the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission of Pittsburgh.

Robert Dalton, a retired Gillette Co. executive, died on June 8, 1996, a day after he attempted to save a fishing companion from drowning in 56-degree water in Old Harbor Creek in Cape Cod Bay.

"He was very gentle and kind and a wonderful father and husband," Dalton's sister, Margaret Stapleton of Canton, said today. "This is quite an honor."

Dalton, who lived at 11 Lantern Lane, was fishing from a jetty with David Reynolds, 51, of Andover when sand gave way and Reynolds slid into the water.

Dalton extended his fishing rod to Reynolds, who grabbed it and accidentally pulled Dalton into the water.

Dalton was pulled down when the hip waders he was wearing flooded with water. Reynolds couldn't find Dalton in the tricky current.

Carnegie also honored Peter Tonelli, 32, of Norfolk, who pulled Reynolds from the water. Reynolds and Tonelli survived.

The Coast Guard reported that it took several minutes to find Dalton, who was finally spotted by two fishermen in a small boat. Rescuers believe he was in the water for more than 20 minutes before he was found and resuscitated on shore.

The two men had been standing in about three feet of water by one of two jettys that are popular fishing spots in Sandwich.

Dalton, an avid fisherman, used to go out early in the morning, a neighbor said.

Dalton's sister said her brother and Reynolds, who also worked for Gillette, were close friends.

"Robert had fished all his life," she said. "He knew everything about flyfishing. He was an outdoorsman."

Born and raised in Boston, Dalton graduated from Boston Latin School and Boston College.

His 25-year career at Gillette included a stint in County Carlow, Ireland, where he was assigned to the company's Braun division.

In 1988, he was promoted to vice president of manufacturing, Gillette Blade and Razor division, and oversaw the operation of the South Boston Manufacturing Center. He retired in 1990.

In addition to his sister, he is survived by his wife, Jean, daughters Amy Dalton of Brookline, Colleen Kroening of St. Paul, Minn., and Catherine Conaway of Richmond, Va., a brother, John D. Dalton of Yarmouth, Maine, and five grandchildren.

Including the new honorees, the Carnegie foundation has named 70 people in the United States and Canada as heroes this year.

The commission was founded in 1904 by industrialist-turned-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.